



Department of Justice

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Bristol, Connecticut, Resident Convicted On Sexual Exploitation Charges

MARTINSBURG, WEST VIRGINIA — A 50 year old Bristol, Connecticut, man was convicted today by a Federal Trial Jury sitting in Martinsburg, West Virginia, before Chief Judge John Preston Bailey of charges relating to the sexual exploitation of children.

United States Attorney Sharon L. Potter announced that JOHN E. HARGROVE, also known as “sun warrior48,” also known as “master_4younger_f_slave” was convicted after a three-day trial on an Indictment returned against him on July 17, 2007, charging him with three counts of using his computer to sexually exploit children.

The evidence in the trial showed that the defendant had been communicating via instant message chat from his computer in Connecticut with four different minor females in late 2006 and early 2007. Of the four girls, two were actual teenage girls and two were undercover law enforcement officers. The defendant approached the girls on-line after having viewed their MySpace profile pages in an on-line group.

HARGROVE was convicted on Count One after evidence was presented that he used the internet to transfer obscene images depicting sado-masochistic activity to a person he believed to be a 14 year-old girl, but who in fact was an undercover law enforcement officer in Hampshire County, West Virginia.

Evidence was presented in support of Count Two which showed HARGROVE’s use of the internet to transport images of child pornography to a person he believed to be a 14 year-old girl. These images depicted a real 14-15 year old girl with whom the defendant had an on-line relationship. The minor testified at trial.

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HARGROVE was also convicted on Count Three after evidence was presented that he used the internet to attempt to entice, persuade, and induce a girl he believed to be 14 years old to travel from West Virginia to Connecticut to engage in various forms of illegal sexual activity with him there. In fact, the 14 year-old girl was the undercover officer in Hampshire County, West Virginia.

USA Potter noted that “this case reinforces the message of internet safety to our youth. Just as would-be sexual predators may believe an undercover law enforcement officer is a child, these predators can also pretend to be a peer and develop a trusting relationship with unsuspecting children. In this case, a very brave girl took the stand to testify against the defendant and proved that victims will stand up for themselves and their rights.”

HARGROVE, who is in custody, faces up to a life sentence.

The case was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys David J. Perri and Robert H. McWilliams, Jr. The case was investigated by the Hampshire County Sheriff’s Office and the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and assisted by the Connecticut Computer Crimes Task Force; the Waterbury, Connecticut, Police Department; and the Glastonbury, Connecticut, Police Department.

This case was brought as part of Project Safe Childhood. In February 2006, the Department of Justice created Project Safe Childhood, a nationwide initiative designed to protect children from online exploitation and abuse. Led by the United States Attorneys Offices, Project Safe Childhood uses federal, state and local resources to better locate, apprehend, and prosecute individuals who exploit children via the Internet, as well as identify and rescue victims. For more information about Project Safe Childhood, please visit www.projectsafechildhood.gov/.

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